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**Remarks as delivered by Dr. Noeleen Heyzer,
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**Myanmar 2nd Development Cooperation Forum
Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 27 January 2014**

Your Excellency, Dr. Kan Zaw,
Union Minister of National Planning and Economic Development

Excellencies,
Development Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

The Industrialist, Henry Ford, once said: “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

For more than six years now, since the terrible aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, it has been my privilege, as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, to ‘come together’, with the Government of Myanmar and our other development partners.

We have indeed ‘kept together’ and ‘worked together’ by focusing our efforts on national development and improving the lives of the people of Myanmar – especially those in the rural areas.

Good progress has been made, though the reform agenda, with the beginnings of shared success already visible today. Equally evident however, is the need for us to continue the development journey; accelerate the process of reform; invest in peace, respect, and the rule of law – especially for minority groups; and increase both regional and international support for the social and economic transformation initiated by the Government, so that further progress will be made for the wellbeing of all people – especially in the more remote areas, where 70 per cent of the population lives.

In this regard, I would like to thank our three distinguished presenters for a very comprehensive views on strategies for the future.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Prioritizing Key Quick Wins

It is greatly encouraging to see that the revised Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (FESR) focuses on opportunities for “must”, “quick wins”, and “long-game” – to bring the concrete and lasting benefits of reform and democratization to the people of Myanmar. This is vital because reconciliation and national harmony can only be sustained

when prosperity is shared, when all communities are empowered, and when people have a real voice in decision-making and control over their own lives based on their human rights.

Especially encouraging is the Framework's orientation of macroeconomic policies to be more developmental – from the zero tax rating of basic foods, to cash transfer payments encouraging school enrollment, from vouchers for maternal and child health to the proposed employment guarantee scheme for public works and the interventions to improve food security and agricultural productivity.

It is precisely these kinds of social safety nets which ESCAP has been advocating for all countries in Asia and the Pacific – forward-looking macroeconomic policies to reduce inequalities and to help build resilience to vulnerabilities and shocks by inclusive and sustainable development.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ESCAP Support for Myanmar Development

In his historic 2012 address to the Union Assembly, the United Nations Secretary-General pointed to the need for job creation, poverty reduction, and greater development assistance to Myanmar. I am so pleased to hear the progress and I will be reporting to the Secretary-General on these achievements.

ESCAP has worked closely with the Government to strengthen the capacity of small and medium enterprises, to help meet these challenges – especially through the empowerment of women and youth. I am very pleased, therefore, to announce today a collaboration between ESCAP, Infosys, the Government of India, and the Government of Myanmar, on what will be a US\$ 1 million, in a new presidential initiative for Myanmar's young entrepreneurs – to create jobs and investment opportunities in the IT sector, and to help the country and its people leapfrog into the global knowledge economy, building cutting-edge skills and competitiveness in these areas to become a middle-income country.

We are developing training modules for more than 100 young engineers and entrepreneurs, who will be 'up-skilled' at the Infosys training centre. Phase I of this initiative will be launched next week in Mysore, India, and will see 25 outstanding IT engineers from Myanmar undergoing 12 weeks of intensive training in core competencies of software development – which in turn will prepare them to work in any major e-government initiative or global IT company operating in the country. I am doubly happy to say that 23 of the 25 participants, selected entirely on merit, are young women. I know you will join me in wishing them, and this initiative, every success. In addition, we are pleased to have already trained almost 200 government officials in e-Government, in partnership with the civil service training college.

The focus on facilitating responsible private sector engagement with development in Myanmar has been a central theme of ESCAP's work since our 2009 development forum with Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz, which identified the importance of such engagement, including through models like public private partnerships (PPPs), in responding to development challenges. The provisions of the FESR which target improved legal frameworks for PPPs, as well as infrastructure for energy provision, and public transport, therefore are welcome progress in this regard.

Building capacity is another critical development challenge at all levels in Myanmar – not just in the formulation of policy, but also for implementation. This is why ESCAP has opened a Regional Technical Support Office in Yangon at the request of the Government, and why we organized with the Government of Singapore a 5-day ministerial-level knowledge-sharing mission to Singapore last year – headed by His Excellency U Soe Thane. Initiatives such as

these will assist Myanmar, and other LDCs in the sub-region, to more fully integrate with the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, and to move towards graduation from the least developed category by 2020. We have also invested in building statistical capacity and in support to the upcoming Census in the country as we believe that good datasets can change mindsets.

Another key aspect of Myanmar's closer regional integration is the work being done to align the country's disaster early warning systems with those of its neighbours to deal with shared vulnerability. I was very pleased, last November, to officially transfer the Sittwe seismic station to the Government – and to announce a new allocation of US\$750 000, funded by the ESCAP Multi-donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster, and Climate Preparedness to further strengthen Myanmar's capacity and contributions to regional early warnings and preparedness.

In addition, I was very pleased that we received the recent approval, by the LIFT Fund, of ESCAP's proposal for building productive capacities and improving livelihood in the dry zone.

With this, ESCAP will have allocated approximately US\$ 4 million to support the country.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Conclusion

In conclusion, since this will be my last address as the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, allow me please to say that it has been my honour and privilege to work with the Government, to help put people and their communities at the center of development. I would also like to congratulate His Excellency, the President, the Ministers, and the Government, on the reform agenda and progress thus far.

In closing, I want to emphasize that both ESCAP, and I personally, remain committed and long-term development partners for the Government and the people of Myanmar on your journey towards sustained and shared prosperity.

I wish you every success.

I thank you.